

**Distributed Learning Council (DLC)**  
**College of Outreach and Distance Education, Room 103A**  
**October 19, 2009**

**DRAFT - Minutes**

**Attendees:** Kathy Austin, Matt Baker, Dennis Fehr, Ariel Fernandez, Karissa Greathouse, Fred Hartmeister, Sherry Herzog, Bob Hickerson, Glen Hill, Patrick Hughes, Hossein Mansouri, Cynthia McKenney, Michele Moskos, Carla Myers, Jean Scott, Rosslyn Smith, Kimberly Vardeman

**Guests:** Brent Guinn (attending on behalf of John Kobza), Todd Chambers (attending on behalf of Kent Wilkinson)

**Absent:** Hansel Burley (attending conference), Michael Giesselmann, James Hoffman (attending College of Business meetings), John Kobza, Debbie Laverie (attending conference), Isis Leslie, Amy Murphy, Valerie Paton (attending conference), Vicki Sutton, Vicki West, Kent Wilkinson (teaching class)

Dean Matt Baker welcomed everyone to the DLC meeting.

- i. **How Can CODE better serve your college?** Dean Baker requested that the DLC members come prepared to address this topic since CODE was charged with providing centralized institutional support for growing high quality distributed learning programs.
  - a. Reports from Committee Members
    - i. College of Education – Hansel Burley was absent but his report (see below) was given to the members for their review and discussion. These issues were addressed by the Council members and noted after this report.

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***Feedback to CODE on Ways to Improve Distance Learning From the CoEd***  
***Hansel Burley –October 16, 2009***

- ***I asked faculty for ways that CODE could better serve the College of Education, in terms of CODE's evolving role of providing centralized institutional support for high quality distributed/distance learning programs. The summarized responses are below. Many of these statements are from individual faculty members, without editing. Other statements below are syntheses of similar statements. The conclusions below do not constitute an evaluation, nor or they the official position of the College of Education on Blackboard(Bb) and distributed/distance education problems. Blackboard seems to be the most immediate and salient concern.***
  - ***Blackboard support communication is a problem: There is a perceived lack of a sense of urgency about problems or the consequences of problems—lack Bb not working on weekends. When the system is down, faculty have to restructure assignments and timelines. We need better communication to users of problems. Even with these problems, there is a demand for new online courses. Because of current system/support issues, we cannot offer a fully online program.***
    - ***Support is the major problem.***

- *Hybrid courses have additional problems and expenses for students. Faculty and students make elaborate and expensive plans to get to Lubbock, and they get here and the equipment is not working.*
    - *Without technical support (and [implied] a vision for technical support), most online courses motor along the same way with students doing a lot of reading on their own and viewing of static PPT, etc.*
    - *High quality distance education is becoming the core of teacher education. This is a high priority issue.*
  - *Because of problems, instructors spend a good deal of time working with textbook vendors, canceling or delaying assignments, and tutoring.*
    - *Online students cannot get textbooks in a timely fashion.*
  - *Two planned and one unplanned break in Bb service came early in the semester causing plenty of student anxiety and frustration. These breaks cause plenty of faculty restructuring.*
  - *Distance evaluations are insufficient to measure quality teaching. What is needed is an instrument that measures quality teaching.*
    - *Evaluations are sent to students who have been dropped/withdrawn. This should stop.*
  - *Some students new to Bb needed quite a bit of tutoring.*
  - *Bb accessibility issues are huge. Orientation and mobility programs are taught online, and many students have visual impairments. There are still problems with Bb and Braille course (implication is that the course worked in WebCT.) Distance education courses need to be accessible to all students. The technology to improve accessibility exists. Let's use it.*
  - *Other problems: setting up the courses (getting them created, created for multiple sections). Problems affect evaluations.*
    - *It takes a huge amount of time to re-design a course, and even more time to make that course accessible, and even more time still to make the course pedagogically sound.*
- *IVC Issues*
  - *More IVC rooms at Fredericksburg and Highland Lakes (from a chair)*
  - *IVC fails to work often.*
  - *Use of Mediasite to "enhance IVC experience" (from IT person)*
- *Streamline admissions process for online students. Currently, there is much confusion. Students just can't walk from office to office to solve problems.*
- *Business model accounting is needed.*

- *Clearly and publically (and perhaps repeatedly) warn and forewarn new students about the computer and Internet capacity and computer skills they will need to be successful with web-based coursework.*
- *Courses must have a reasonable number of students because of the labor-intensive nature of online teaching.*

*Suggestions (in no particular order)*

1. *We need a bookstore person/sub-manager who has online course book orders as a priority. Mechanisms are needed for getting the textbooks to students.*
2. *No Bb upgrades are maintenance after the semester has begun.*
3. *First time Bb users need to be required to complete a short online module on how to use Bb before they can take the course.*
4. *Faculty need ongoing, real time, just-in-time assistance. This needs to be team-oriented with a vision for excellence. Faculty members do not have the technical expertise or the time to develop the technical expertise for continually improving online courses (this was written in the context of raising the quality of courses).*
5. *Need to separate technical part of evaluation from instructional part (podcasting, video, folks who can raise the quality of the online experience for students).*
6. *We need written guidelines and recommendations for quality courses.*
7. *Some faculty have to buy equipment and software out-of-pocket or with non-instructional (grant usually) funds to support online efforts (thumb drives, Camtasia Studio)*
8. *Written course design guidelines/recommendations. (TTU "standards" for quality of online courses?)*
9. *We need ongoing assistance from designated course design specialists and multimedia specialists.*
10. *We need to look at the big picture (potential large scale plans, future additions and development, future target audiences) to create program-level cohesion, consistency, and scalability in online initiatives, rather than developing disjointed courses in isolation.*
11. *Licenses for Adobe Acrobat Professional for anyone involved in preparing online courses (and advice about recommended file formats).*
12. *Information/training for faculty about online pedagogy.*
13. *Information for faculty about best practices for communication and interaction during an online course; how to promote active learning in an online course.*
14. *Information about setting realistic expectations for the time commitment involved in teaching online, and managing that time.*
15. *Online faculty need equipment that will allow them to access Bb from home (rather than using personal equipment)*

**16. We need dedicated presentation software (implication is other than PPT—there are a growing number of software tools that enhance or supplant PPT).**

**17. Need funds to support students who travel to Lubbock for hybrid courses.**

**18. Funds are needed to work with students who are interning at a distance.**

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- ii. (College of Education – Hansel Burley) Discussion Issues:
  - 1. Blackboard – Dean Baker reported that Sam Segran stressed to him that IT is taking this issue very seriously. Kathy Austin and Karissa Greathouse also stressed that this issue will be resolved.
  - 2. Bookstore – Cynthia McKenney reported that she would like a designated person at the bookstore to address phone calls, web site issues and resources for textbooks. Dean Baker asked Sherry Herzog to follow up with the Bookstore and identify the point person and invite them to our next DLC meeting. He also instructed Michele Moskos to research other universities’ bookstore procedures.
  - 3. Enhance Quality Assurance – Dean Baker reported that we are working on a policy that would allow us to pick up the cost of one course per semester for quality matters review. He has a meeting scheduled next week with some design team members to discuss processes and procedures and how to determine courses in term of fairness. Dean Baker will distribute policies to the Council members for feedback.
- iii. Agriculture – Cynthia McKenney reported on her concern regarding the application process and Blackboard training. She would like to see a centralized resource that could streamline the application process. Dean Baker reported that the TLTC is in the process of setting up individual consultations on Blackboard training.
- iv. Architecture – Glenn Hill reported he would like to see definitions of distance and standard courses that would make it clear that there is no difference between the two since they should achieve the same thing (i.e. “a course is a course is a course”). He also reported that the El Paso program is going well.
- v. Arts & Sciences – Hossein Mansouri – reported that he received feedback from two department chairs. Their concerns were: 1) The lack of ability to review, approve, and monitor offerings at a department level; 2) Funding – why they aren’t receiving some of the funding that the courses are generating. Hossein will coordinate a meeting between the department chairs and Dean Baker and Rosslyn Smith to discuss this and other issues such as developing new courses.
- vi. Graduate school – Fred Hartmeister expressed his concern regarding online evaluation instruments, including cover sheets. Rosslyn Smith commented that the cover sheet was adjusted to reflect the new campus coding, and that she will share the revised cover sheet with the DLC
- vii. TTUHSC – Carla Myers reported that they are experiencing the same issues with Blackboard as are being experienced at TTU.
- viii. Engineering – Brent Guinn reported that they are moving forward with undergraduate courses but their concerns include: 1) Promoting transfer plans to junior colleges; 2) How to promote courses that we are offering to junior colleges. Brent will provide information to Dean Baker on these courses; 3) Reverse transfers; 4) Help with transient student status for summer. Michele Moskos will try to get this application expedited.

Rosslyn Smith is in the process of drafting letter to be sent out to the deans on what courses the colleges would like to make available to visiting students. Discussion followed with the Council members regarding visiting students.

- ix. College of Human Sciences – Jean Scott reported that registration/enrollment has been their issue. She feels a campus coordinator is needed to help with these issues.
  - x. College of Visual and Performing Arts – Dennis Fehr reported that things are going well but the consensus among the department chairs is that they want to do more online teaching. They would like to have a meeting with the College of Outreach and Distance Education to discuss this issue.
  - xi. Libraries – Kimberly Vardeman reported on some of the new resources the Library has to offer such as personalization, a library link and a distance learner page. Kimberly will forward contact information to Cynthia McKenney.
- b. Rotation Schedule – Rosslyn Smith will email the rotation schedule for membership on the DLC to the Council members. She will be contacting the deans/VP's of the members who are scheduled to rotate off the Council to see if they wish to appoint someone new or to reappoint the current member.
  - c. TTU MobilEdu –Kathy Austin reported on this new service to students which will include directory information, course information, events, maps, news, video content, etc. There will be no personally identifiable information on this service. Future plans include availability to pay bills and integrating course registration.

## ii. Action Items

- a. Approval of Minutes of September 21, 2009: Kathy Austin moved to approve, Cynthia McKenney seconded the motion. Minutes were approved by a show of hands.

## iii. Other

- a. Patrick Hughes reported that six (6) new proposed wind energy courses are being developed.
- b. Rosslyn Smith read an announcement from Valerie Paton that one of her students (Javier Flores) is defending next Friday, October 23 at 1:00 pm in the Education Building. This student used their DL Communication Survey with community college students and has very interesting results. All Council members are welcome to attend.
- c. Distance Learning Awareness Week –Dean Baker reported that CODE is hosting a kick-off event for distance learning week on November 9<sup>th</sup> at the SUB, Matador Room from 4:00-6:00 pm. He invited all Council members to attend.

- iv. **Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm. The next meeting of the DLC is November 16, 2009.